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ABSTRACT

The goal of this practicum was to design an effective program orientation session for teachers and parents that would enhance parent involvement in an American Indian Head Start preschool program. Objectives were that: (1) a total of 90% of families and 100% of staff would attend a program orientation session; (2) a parent involvement activity idea book would be generated during the orientation session; and (3) half the families would volunteer twice a month for participation in the classrooms. Implications for continuation and duplication of the practicum are included. Results revealed that even though the objectives were not met, the program orientation session effectively enhanced parent involvement, particularly in terms of classroom activities, policy, and decision making. Factors that contributed to the failure to attain practicum objectives are discussed. Appended are 20 references and related materials. (GLR)

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Developing Positive Parent Involvement In Indian Pre-School Programs Through Appropriate Program Orientation

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by

Karen King

Cohort 49

A Practicum Report Presented to the Master's Program for Child and Youth Care Administrators in Partial Fulfillment of the Master of Science Degree Requirements

NOVA University

1992

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Abstract

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Descriptors: American Indian/Indian Education/Native American Education/Multi-Cultural Education/Cultural Isolation/Parent Involvement/Parent Teacher Cooperation/Parent Education/Home School Communication/Early Childhood Education/Preschool Curriculum/Child Caregivers/Parent Workshops

Parenting skills enrichment and participation in classroom activities were not maximized due to inappropriate program orientation.

The author facilitated a re-examination of parent involvement which was to result in increased participation in classroom volunteerism. An orientation session was developed and implemented which expanded awareness from the traditional parent involvement practices to more empowering activities. A composite of positive Indian parent involvement activities was developed and made available to other programs, families and staff.

Increased positive parent involvement was demonstrated by subsequent increase in classroom volunteerism and participation of parents in policy/decision making functions. Appendices include In-Kind report forms, sample evaluations and parent activity poster.

NOVA UNIVERSITY
CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF EDUCATION
3301 College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33314

VERIFICATION FORM

Verification of Practicum Activity

Dear Verifier:

Practicum students in Nova's Master's Program for Child and Youth Care Administrators are asked to provide field-based verification that the project activities reported in their final practicum documents took place as described. You have been designated verifier to fulfill this confirmation function by the student named below. On this form, then, please write a note attesting to your knowledge of the project activity described in the final practicum report to which this will be attached. (Note that you are not asked to evaluate, nor make judgments about the quality of the project.)

I confirm that Karen King completed the activities detailed in her Practicum work. I personally attended one orientation session, have knowledge of PPC empowerment activities and am in receipt of the parent activity poster.

Should additional information be needed, please advise.

Practicum Title Developing Positive Parent Involvement in Indian Pre-School Programs Through Appropriate Program Orientation

Student's Name Karen King

Cohort 49 **Date** December 5, 1991

Verifier's Name D. Duncan Perrote D. Duncan Perrote
(please print ----------and sign)

Verifier's position Family Life Agent, University of Wyoming, Wind River Extension Office

Address: POB 610

Fort Washakie, WY 82514
City State Zip

AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. Where it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other workers in the field and in the hope that my own work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

Dec. 29, 1991
Date

Karen King
Signature of Student

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

An unique work setting on an Indian Reservation in the west-central region of the United States was impacted by this practicum. Over 12,000 enrolled members of two Plains Indian Tribes inhabit the 2.6 million acre Reservation which extends east from the Rocky Mountain continental divide, across foothills and high plains to low-lying river valleys and near desert prairies.

An estimated 1,200 children between birth and five years of age reside on the Reservation, making the very young the largest population segment in the community. From 1968 the setting was the only pre-school program serving the entire Reservation. Since 1989 four additional pre-school programs have been initiated in public schools and under Tribal auspices.

The program impacted by the proposed practicum provides comprehensive services to 165 children and families in three pre-school Centers and one home-base option for 4 hours/day, 160 days/year. The program employs forty staff members, four 8-hour/day for 220 days/year and thirty-six 6-hour/day for

180 days/year. Breakfast and lunch are served daily. Transportation is provided daily with six vehicles logging over 100 miles/vehicle/day.

The writer directs three early child care programs (Head Start and two state projects) which impact young children and their families regardless of Tribal affiliation or enrollment. Supervision of 39 staff, administration of policies, fiscal accountability, coordination with other assisting agencies and pre-school programs, and overall daily operation of three Centers across the Reservation are also responsibilities of the author. Under the tutelage of a community child care coalition, which the writer co-founded in 1989, several additional funding applications are currently being developed to provide quality comprehensive collaborated services.

Life-long affiliation with Indian communities serve as background experience coupled with 15 years working experience as a federal program director in public schools, higher education, and early childhood programs with the Tribes of the area. Past training expertise includes legal research on Indian issues, and national conference presentation experience. An undergraduate degree in Communication and Theatre with a teaching endorsement from the University of Colorado and over 30 graduate credits from

various institutions with an emphasis on Indian Studies are held by the author.

Chapter 2

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Statement

Positive, meaningful, and endearing parent involvement activities were not maximized in the current program operation. In order to best meet the goals of the program and the needs of an in-crisis community, providing positive parent involvement practices was deemed essential. The program maintained adequate parent involvement per required In-Kind documentation. However, the base of parent involvement was fund-raising activities as opposed to parent effectiveness building practices.

Documentation

Like many Reservation communities, the setting is impacted by rapid population growth, increasing numbers of single, teen mothers, devastating economic hardship, excessive unemployment rates, high incidence of alcoholism, domestic violence and child abuse/neglect. Sufficient evidence documents the American Native as today's poorest of the poor.

Of specific concern is the rising suicide rate of 53.6 per 100,000 in 1980 and 124 per 100,000 in 1985. In 1990, seven teen-age suicides ravaged the community. The ratio of suicide among Indians to all other United States residents is 2:1 according to Indian Health Service information.

Additionally, this community has the highest ratio of years of productive life lost among the eight Tribes in the Great Plains region. The biggest cause is accidents, 76% of which are alcohol related. 95% of the child abuse/neglect referrals were alcohol related in 1985 with chronic liver disorder and cirrhosis the second leading cause of death among all Indians.

The proposed practicum problem was effected politically as two Tribal governments function autonomously on one Reservation. Federal and state political structures along

with Tribal autonomy compound difficulties for federal program managers who must address compliance and funding issues with all involved parties.

Further socio-economic conditions impact the problem including the fact that the two historic Tribal enemies were militarily placed on the same Reservation just over 100 years ago. Hostile results pervade although certain observable inter-Tribal relationships have increased during the author's tenure in the community. However, the problem of continuing the cycle of poor self image, Inter-Tribal conflict and related social incompetencies grows with less than optimum parental involvement in programs providing effective parent training, open communication strategies and policy decision opportunities.

The parent involvement component is one of five critical areas of Head Start services provided nationally. Mandates determine opportunities for parents/families to provide input in curriculum design, program options, specific program operations and policies/procedures, special events, staffing, and budgeting. Training, progress reports on children's development and classroom participatory activities are also guaranteed all parents/guardians enrolled in the Head Start Program.

Local communities are to design and implement programs which comply with national mandates. Options for operation re then largely a matter of proper "grassroots" orientation to federal guidelines and empowerment of the community to manage programs impacting the lives of young children.

As appropriate practices are often analyzed in terms of classroom activities, similarly appropriate practices for parent involvement must also be scrutinized and evaluated. Therefore, the following local data documents the problem of inappropriate parent involvement practices. The following information purposefully analyzes six types of activities program participants engage in per documented In-Kind reports from September and October, 1990. Comparable data was collected from September and October 1991, to determine the impact of improved program orientation and related strategies measuring subsequent change of participant activity in the parent involvement component as a result of the practicum implementation.

Documentable In-Kind is required by the federal funding agency to prove the impact of parent involvement in the program operation. The program is required to match 11% of all federal funds received in the form of In-Kind. Appendix A is a sample form used for reporting In-Kind which is completed by any non-federal employee or program who

contributes goods, services and/or time to the program. Table 1 represents the types of activities and the In-Kind dollar value assigned to the activities contributed by Head Start Program participants.

Table 1

Type of Parent Involvement Activities
Sept.-Oct. 1990 and 1991

	$200	$800	$1600	$2400	$3200
Fund Raising					
90					$3355
91			$1601		
Classroom Activity					
90	$120				
91				$1907	
Special Events					
90		$557			
91			$1200		
Donated Goods					
90	$338				
91			$1127		
Training					
90	$272				
91					$3143
Transportation					
90				$2317	
91					$2991

Additional In-Kind and other information is available from 1987 which would provide a more longitudinal study. However, the program has changed dramatically in terms of increased enrollment, expanded staff and related trainings and overall management modifications. Therefore, the following PIR (Program Information Report) and SAVI (Self-Assessment Validation Instrument) data from 1989 and 1990 is determined to provide an additional reflection of the pre-practicum parent involvement practices.

The PIR is an annual required federal composite evaluation of the entire Head Start operation. Parent involvement, social services, health, education/handicap services, enrollment, staffing patterns, personnel turnover, disability services, and one-time questions are compulated for each local program and then compiled nationally.

Table 2 demonstrates documentable evidence of related volunteer/parent involvement from the 1989 and 1990 PIR findings. The need for improved parent involvement was evident when one notes the disproportionate number of volunteers between the two years. With the increase in enrollment from 125 to 165 children/families between 1989 and 1990, volunteer increases would be expected to be higher in the 1990 PIR.

Table 2

PIR VOLUNTEER DATA

	1989	1990
TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS	4,559	5,938
Past Participants	1,810	1,124
Current Participants	2,749	3,814
TOTAL NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS	233	276
TOTAL NUMBER OF CLASSROOMS RECEIVING VOLUNTEER SERVICES AT LEAST 50% OF THE DAYS SESSIONS HELD IN OPERATING PERIOD	5:6	6:10
CURRENT OR FORMER HEAD START PARENT IN PROGRAM OPERATION		
As Volunteer	281	353
As Paid Staff	16	41
# ATTENDING PARENT TRAININGS	69	52

An annual SAVI is conducted on all five component areas in a comprehensive manner. The reasons for short-comings or non-compliance are noted by a concensus of the team members. "Lack of sufficient parent involvement" is a reason provided for non-compliance on the national instrument. Therefore, the frequency of the response, "lack of sufficient parent involvement" is measureable and further indicated the seriousness of the problem.

Table 3 symbolizes frequency of the response for non-compliant standards in the parent involvement component of the 1989 and 1990 SAVI. The discrepancy between the two operating years is indicative of the fluctuation experienced in the parent involvement component each year.

Table 3

SAVI 1989 and 1990 Result
Frequency of Non-Compliance Response,
Lack of Sufficient Parent Involvement

ED.=Education S.S.=Social Service

P.I.=Parent Involvement Nut.=Nutrition

H.=Health H.C.=Handicap

Personal observation further served as documentation of the problem of effective Indian parent involvement in early childhood programs. Comments made by program participants include the following. "We worked 10 hours at the concession stand and didn't make enough to pay for the supplies," "Only four of us did the bake sale and there's 51 kids at the Center," "How much do I HAVE to donate this time?" "I'm burned out. No more fund raisers for me!"

A most disturbing observation was noted while attending planned fund-raising events and the parents were so busy working to raise money that the children were unsupervised, fending for themselves or otherwise found in situations threatening to their safety. Making money to buy the children Christmas gifts then displaced the opportunity for effective parent/child positive interaction.

The author works with several other Indian pre-school Directors who have also shared the same concern of appropriate parent involvement activities. One fellow Director commented, "If we could get parents to understand that their job as teacher to their kids is more important than their success at raffle ticket sales, then we would be making a BIG contribution. This way we're just furthering a tradition--slave labor."

Analysis

To more fully understand the causes and symptoms of the problem of appropriate, positive Indian parent involvement, an historic perspective is needed. An estimated 14 million Native Americans thrived on this continent when Columbus arrived. In less than 300 years an approximate surviving 48,000 Native Americans were forced to live in some of the least hospitable regions of this country. Today there are almost 2 million Native Americans in the United States according to 1990 census figures. The oppression and inherent negative self-concepts of this history has most dramatically impacted Native American family structure within the last century.

With the establishment of the Reservation system in 1868, by the U.S. Dept. of War, many predictable problems in Native American family structure arose. Changes in the cultural essence and century-old patterns of Native American life were irreversibly made in a wink of an eye. Clothing, shelter, diet, custom and ways of life were never to be the same for the first inhabitants of this continent. Parenting, traditionally a shared responsibility throughout the extended Native American family with certain lessons to be taught by the elders, the recognized clan system and/or the other Tribal members, was most disrupted by the Reservation system.

Another crisis to the Native American family came with the myriad of treaties, many based on educational trade for lands. Vine Deloria (1968) cites many historic atrocities which were brought about by the promise of "education." Reservation boarding schools were established and charged with the education of every Reservation child from age six. Armed with educational goals to eliminate cultural practices altogether, education came to mean the physical, cultural, philosophical separation of many young Native Americans from their inalienable rights. Actual kidnapping by some school officials is documented. (David 72)

Native American spiritualism was equally challenged. Foreign religions were imposed throughout Reservations. With the resulting coupling of education and religion, mission schools were born. Thus, parent involvement was the last strategy on the agenda of early federal Indian education programs. Rather, termination of all native practices was priority.

Furthermore, the standard curriculum of public education then and now does serious disservice to the first people of this country. Planned omission or mere ignorance of Native contributions, accomplishments, and successes throughout U.S. textbooks and media resources historically attest to the perpetuation of such negative images of Native Americans.

Although the American film industry has glorified certain Native attributes, even the positive characteristics become stereotypes. The dominant society's historic movies about Indians forces an Arapahoe woman filmmaker to make the following comment on the internationally acclaimed film "Dances with Wolves". "It's just another cavalry story to me."

Literature exaggerating savagery and cruelty to the "pioneers" serves little use in developing positive images. Annual Thanksgiving token-Indian units teach children relatively insignificant and somewhat humiliating characteristics about the indigeneous people of this country. Teaching that Columbus discovered America nullifies the very existence of Native Americans! Therefore, positive and realistic images of Native Americans' endurance and strength seem necessarily the first strategy on the agenda of present day Indian education.

The problem facing Indian education today is how to gracefully make the quantum leap from total absence of cultural heritage and parent involvement in the education of young Indian children for the last four generations to the total absorbtion in that process for the future generations' benefit.

Many initiatives have been legislated to assist the transition. Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Indian Education programs, Department of Education Indian set-aside programs, self-determination projects, multi-cultural curriculum development projects, Housing/Urban Development programs, Indian Health Services and many other health and social service allotments have been authorized to impact the discrepancy of what is and what should be in Indian education. Federal and Tribal educational programs from pre-school to post graduate levels have been attempted in the last 30 years targeted to specifically serve Indian populations. However, the problem of effective positive parent involvement in Indian education programs continues. Could families be disoriented by the rash of services, regulations, required paperwork, and relatively sudden change in parent involvement philosophy? Surely so.

Within 100 years of American history, the parenting cycle of the American Indian has been broken, then legislatively mandated to recycle. Approximately $12 million in federal education, health, and welfare programs is available annually to enhance social competence, eliminate disadvantages, and develop long-term benefits for the community effected by the proposed practicum. Inherent to current federal financial assistance a parent

involvement/advisory/advocacy component is typically attached.

Thus a unique relationship emerges with local Native Americans readily making use of the federal services, but remotely involving themselves with the policies or operations of those services. To evidence, the writer directs an early childhood program impacting 175 children and families. Operation and policy decisions are reached by a Board which requires a quorum of only three. The quorum has been a challenge to achieve at times when critical management issues, such as employment, must be addressed.

In summary, an analysis of the problem showed that positive Indian parent involvement in the education of young children is adversely effected by history, a basic distrust of the federal education system, a precedent of little parental input in program operations, misorientation to program goals as well as personal reasons affecting Reservation families.

A review of the literature verified three basic percepts relative to the practicum.

1. Successful early childhood education programs integrate positive parent involvement practices that empower families, provide curricula endorsed by the families served in the program and share information about individual child's

development frequently with families. A position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAEYC 1990) succinctly summarizes the host of studies regarding the presence of positive parent involvement in education. NAEYC recognizes that when parents are meaningfully involved in the program, the program is more likely to provide an effective learning environment for all children.

The evidence supporting various types of parental inclusion having positive results including measurable academic gains is extensive. Galen (1991) provides a brief synthesis of such studies and continues to suggest that a continuum of practices from least effective to most effective will help early childhood program administrators with assessing parent involvement practices within their programs.

Hamburg (1991) continues support of the meaningful involvement of parents in early childhood programs. "Family is central to every child's life, but where parents cannot give adequate care, especially young parents who may not even have basic parenting skills, society should provide the kind of support and assistance that will teach them to nurture their children and help strengthen their family" (p. 31). This philosophy speaks directly to the program impacted by

this practicum given the young age of single mothers enrolling children in the program.

2. Staff/parent positive relations are critical to successful early childhood programs. Coleman (1991), Abbott and Gold (1991), and Bundy (1991) ascribe to the precept that early childhood educators must make the critical first link between "school" and "home" a positive one along with specific strategies to assist such a process.

The mutual respect that must be fostered between educational settings and home environments is also well documented. Of particular significance to Head Start programs with this ideology in mind is the text PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH IN EARLY CHILD CARE SETTINGS which is a collection of proceedings of the second annual UCLA National Conference on Preventive Psychiatry edited by Stephen Goldstone, 1988. Torres, Sale, Veenman, Feeney and Sysko, and Powell articles provide extensive evidence of the pressure on parents and early childhood personnel to establish and maintain a successfully positive relationship in the best interest of children. Bundy (1991) also supports strategies throughout the school year which would assist the open communication between staff and parents with particular significance given orientation at the beginning of the school year and staff/parent activities.

3. Cultural sensitivity/awareness permeates successful early childhood programs. Numerous studies have been conducted to support the importance of culturally relevant education. Gordon (1988) provides an historic perspective to the changing role of child care workers and adds that the sensitivity to various cultures came about largely incident to the Soviet Union/United States space race. "We came to understand that when there is great dissonance between the culture of the learner and the culture of the learning environment, learning is impeded" (p. 229).

Clearly, most of the studies relevant to multi-cultural educational practices center around programs serving minority populations. Soto (1991) depicts demographic trends which impact early childhood bilingual/bicultural education practices and states that "minority" enrollments range from 70% to 96% in the nation's 15 largest school districts. It then becomes apparent that "minority" is also a changing concept which further evidences the need for culturally relevant early childhood programs.

Lawrence (1976) provides an approach to developing positive identities for children among the Mississippi Choctaw which is inter-generational and culturally sensitive. The Exploring Childhood curriculum, developed in 1974 to assist the Head Start program with the Mississippi Choctaw

need to involve high school students and young parents, provides an eclectic approach of observation skills and cultural practices which served that community successfully.

Exhaustive research of particular Tribal early childhood programs is available. Most conclusively the research demonstrates that effective early childhood programs incorporate meaningful parent involvement, positive relations between staff and parents, and culturally sensitive curricula.

Chapter 3

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the practicum was to create an effective program orientation session that would enhance positive, meaningful parent involvement. To successfully attain this goal the following objectives were addressed during the 10 week implementation plan.

Objectives

1. 90% of families enrolled in the 1991-1992 program school year and 100% of program staff would attend a program orientation session during September, 1991.

2. 50% of families would volunteer in the classrooms twice monthly for the months of September and October 1991.

3. An effective and culturally sensitive parent involvement activity idea book would be generated during the orientation session for future parent involvement enrichment.

The degree of attainment of these objectives was measured from In-Kind documentation, personal and staff observations and the physical evidence of a completed Parent Activity Enrichment poster.

Many enriching benefits were to be realized upon successful practicum implementation. The expected changes

would help eliminate the reluctance of participants in attending effective parent building activities, empowering decision-making skills, and reduce negative attitudes/comments/perceptions of the program's parent involvement component. The success of the practicum was to impact the families participating in the program presently and in the future.

Chapter 4

SOLUTION STRATEGIES

Existing Programs and Models

Increased attention has been given to enhancing positive Indian parent involvement in early childhood programs. By virtue of the parent involvement clause attached to many current federal programs which permeate Reservation education, health and social services, parent involvement activities are numerous. Voluminous amounts of information relative to specific strategies of parent participation could be gleaned if a composite of program progress reports were developed from a collection throughout Indian country. Unfortunately, the author has no access to such documentation, if the compiled data exists. However, there is general agreement among the experts that since parent involvement is an essential key to unlocking the gates to successful early childhood programs across mainstream America, the same value would prevail among Indian education programs. A major obstacle to this assumption is that Tribal identities and cultural values and practices differ immensely from Tribe to Tribe.

Of general importance to addressing the problem of positive parent involvement in Indian family service and

early childhood programs is the Family Systems Model (Turnbull 1985). Four subsystems which impact three different perspectives of family dynamics is offered by Turnbull. O'Connell (1985) relates how Turnbull's structure applies to the White Mountain Apache and became the basis for development of an early intervention program design serving Native American families in that community. The significance of family and culture in education through extra-familial support is the focus of O'Connell's work. Grandmothers, clanship influence, community values and Tribal government influences are variables impacting the family system approach to service delivery among Native people.

The existing parent involvement component in the program impacted by this practicum functions with values, Tribal government, clanship and family systems vastly different from the White Mountain Apache. Tefft (1968) suggests the change in value, socialization practices and family structure are statistically significant between two generations of the population targeted by this practicum. Parenting skills and demographic data (Indian vs. White) are explained while the data collected supports the hypothesis of a less Indian oriented value system within Tribal families. Tefft's work of 1971 expounds on the earlier value position process and suggests additional hypothesis which would impact any

solution strategy to improve positive Indian parent involvement. Although the latest study continues stereotypic Indian vs. White values classification, which the author finds extremely objectionable, there are numerous references to understanding the people served by this practicum more clearly. Tafoya (1982) offers another existing model of differentiating perception of values impacting Indian education and the role families and culture play in successful early childhood education programs. Extended family and values orientation are delineated from Standard Average European (SAE) and Standard Native American (SNA) perspectives with vivid distinction in terms of oral/written skill development, problem solving skills, learning preference modalities, parenting practices and world view disparities. Spiritual perceptions in relation to Indian education are detailed and offer insight to the basic differences affecting Indian family participation in education as well.

Another model of fundamental value differences between Native American and non-Indian cultures and the impact parent involvement has in Indian education is offered by Locust (1988). Again, an understanding of the spiritual values and belief system of the community being served is proported. Locust continues by offering rationale for retiscent parent

involvement in Indian education. "Avoiding disharmony is desirable in Indian cultures: disharmony is negative and pervasive and can result in unwellness. For instance, Indian parents frequently refuse to go to the school when called, because they have learned that being called means their child is in trouble. The negative situation that is certain to develop among school officials, the child, and the parents brings disharmony for all concerned and can result in illness if spiritual energy becomes low" (p. 322). Locust concludes that discrimination will cease only when Tribal cultures and educational systems develop mutual respect.

Further Native American values classification practices and explanation are suggested by Foerster and Little Soldier (1978). Strategies for improving early childhood development is proported through use of culturally relevant open education learning centers impacted by positive parent involvement and teacher competence to recognize the cultural attributes within the community being served. Active play which enhances basic Native American cultural values blended well with childrearing practices among Indian parents within the home and promoted by teachers who are sensitive to traditional Tribal characteristics is the conclusion for improved Indian education.

In summary, a review of the literature showed that existing models for increasing positive Indian parent involvement in early childhood education programs include the following criteria.

-Tribally specific cultural activities.

-Recognition of the values of the local culture.

-Cultural identity can diminish at a markedly rapid rate, within two generations.

-Indian educators must develop competency in understanding the cultural community they serve.

-Native American learning styles are condusive to active participation.

Solution Strategy

An integration of the criteria cited above was proposed as a solution strategy for the problem of increasing positive Indian parent involvement per the aforementioned goal and objectives.

Three important tasks served as solution strategies.

1. Develop a bi-level orientation program. The orientation process assisted staff and parents in understanding their roles and responsibilities in developing and maintaining a positive parent involvement component in the program.

2. Document the impact of the improved parent involvement which had three specific stages;

a) staff inservice documentation, b) parent orientation documentation, and c) In-Kind documentation of parent involvement activities.

3. A parent involvement activity booklet was to be developed to assist with continuation of positive Indian parent involvement activities.

The solution strategy was effective in terms of human, time and financial resources and addressed the specific problem. Additionally, the proposed solution strategy interplayed effectively with program improvement plans already underway, inservice training/orientation schedules and documentation rigors previously established.

Implementation Plan

The implementation phase of the practicum work is provided below in a chronological order of events detailing the adherence to the proposed implementation and the unexpected occurrences which impacted the outcome of the parent involvement improvement plan.

Information from five other Indian Head Start programs revealed the following similarities and differences relative to parent involvement in like programs. Three of the five Indian Head Start Programs contacted responded that they conduct parent orientation sessions at the beginning

of the school year. Two of the programs indicated that a parent handbook was distributed to parents during the first week of classes. One program hosts Center Meetings and allows a period for questions and answers regarding the parent involvement component.

Family service/parent involvement staff met with the author to brainstorm parent involvement improvement project ideas and develop a commitment to the proposed goals and objectives of the Practicum. Ideas were generated which included "Game Time" at each parent committee meeting, book rewards given to parents who volunteer in the classroom weekly or four times/month, parent trainings to be conducted at two different times (once in the day and once in the evening, both with babysitting services provided by the program), that video equipment be used in the classrooms with parent participation so as to encourage other parents, a Parent of the Day notice for each classroom to elicit more concrete volunteering, and that at the first parent committee meetings fund raising limits for number of activities, amount of funds to be raised and use of funds raised be established.

During staff orientation the parent involvement improvement project was detailed and questions and answers by staff were addressed for a program-wide commitment to the project.

The orientation session was planned with the staff for each Center based on the following guidelines.

INTRODUCTIONS, 10 minutes

Ice-breaker activity, Indian blessing

DIRECTOR'S ORIENTATION, 15 minutes

5 components of Head Start,
Program Operation
Program Management

GAME TIME, 30 minutes

Various active, fun games

REFRESHMENTS, 30 minutes

PARENT INVOLVEMENT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Brainstorm ideas for positive involvement

The orientation sessions were then scheduled for each Center. Children made Open House invitations and took them home to their families to encourage their participation. Refreshments, space, blessing speaker and other pertinent details were arranged. However, due to a community tragedy the Open House at one Center was postponed and the Open House at a second Center had less than desireable attendance. (Four teenagers were killed in a car accident two nights before the Open House was scheduled to take place at one Center which is the community most effected by the loss.)

The Open House which was conducted successfully sparked many ideas for Parent Committee work, limited fund raisers to four/year and was a very positive beginning to the school year. The Open House which was conducted the night of the wake for the teenagers had only 12 parents and 10 children attending. Because such a low turn-out was experienced, the decision to reschedule the full parent involvement improvement project was reached.

A second attempt at the Open House/Orientation for the third Center was conducted with 27 families attending, 8 who had attended during the previous week. Additional suggestions were obtained for inclusion in the Parent Activity Book. The other two Centers' parent involvement/family service staff continued with efforts to secure classroom volunteers and plan a minimum of fund raising activities. The parent involvement/family service staff were advised by the author to use a variety of resources (video, personal observation and printed materials) to actively and positively involve parents in program functions.

The first Parent Committee meetings were held in two Centers to plan the activities (training, classroom, fund raising and special events) for the school year. Staff observed that an effort to endear

families to positive parenting was experienced with discussion centering on training instead of fund raising.

The author met with all staff during monthly staff meetings to evaluate the parent involvement improvement program. Staff offered suggestions for the Parent Activity Book and provided In-Kind documentation from the previous month. At the time, 68 parents/guardians had volunteered in the classroom activities and only five fund raising events had been conducted involving 88 parents program-wide. The author compiled Open House Orientation evaluations which rated the event a seven on a scale of one to ten by 94 Head Start staff and parent respondents. Note Appendix B.

A program parent involvement evaluation, note Appendix C, was also distributed to families via the monthly newsletter to solicit data on the perception of families regarding the program's parent involvement component overall. The parent involvement/family service staff compiled the program parent involvement component evaluations and found that the overall parent involvement component was rated six on a scale of one to ten by a total of 109 staff and parent respondents.

At this time the first parent training was scheduled at each Center. Standard First Aid was offered by a community member who is also a staff member. A total of

18 parents attended the first training program wide. Public relation efforts on the local radio and newspaper media sources were made and the program's monthly newsletter detailed the parent involvement improvement plan.

The Parent Policy Council (PPC), a governing board of the program, experienced a measureable increase in active participation mid-way through the implementation phase. In the past an average of seven PPC members have attended the meetings to determine budget issues, employment concerns, hiring and firing of staff and overall program operation. The first PPC meeting of this school year, after the orientation session, was attended by 16 members out of the 24 elected program wide. Although this was not an objective of the practicum, the author surmises that the orientation sessions helped to increase the overall parent involvement in policy making issues as well.

The author met with all Center staff for an update on the parent involvement improvement plan. It was reported that 79 total parents had volunteered in the classrooms. Staff felt that a slight increase in positive parent involvement in Center operation had been experienced. The reasons for minimal success were discussed and staff expressed concern for the large number of parents not actively involving themselves in the program in any activity.

Precedent, minimal time and financial resources, lack of motivation, attitudes and resistance to change were cited as secondary reasons while babysitting and transportation problems were thought to be primary reasons.

Parent involvement/family service staff and the author next compiled the Parent Activity Book ideas for formatting, printing and distribution. In-Kind documentation was compiled for analysis of parent involvement improvement between the 1990 and 1991 program years.

The third Center's parent meeting to develop a Parent Involvement Book was cancelled because of 18" of snow falling in 12 hours the day the meeting was scheduled. The efforts to meet with the Parent Committee were not successful and therefore, the total number of participants at the Orientation Session reflects only two Centers in the compiled practicum results.

The 18 PPC members who attended the second meeting of the school year decided it would be beneficial to retreat to a location at some distance for three days without children, family and job pressures to review and update the written operational plans for the program. The author was instructed to arrange the event and agreed that the retreat would not only complete the required annual review of written plans, but would provide in-depth orientation to the PPC

members who had not served on the board previously.

The Parent Activity Book was revised to become a poster. The family service staff and the PPC felt a quick-glance, catchy poster would better serve the parents than "just another book". The compiled ideas were formatted and made ready for distribution to five other Indian Head Start Programs and the parents served locally.

The parent involvement/family service staff evaluated the parent involvement improvement plan and offered suggestions for continued positive parent involvement. All data was collected for compilation including In-Kind, orientation evaluations, parent involvement component evaluations and staff/family observations.

Thirteen PPC members attended a retreat for two days and updated and revised the written operational policies and procedures. The retreat proved to be successful in terms of empowering the parents to make quality decisions and justify the policies they implement throughout the school year. Unfortunately, no evaluation devise was designed to collect information by participants as to the values they perceived from such an activity.

Continuation

Based upon the completion of the parent involvement improvement practicum at the completion of the 10 week

implementation period, the following implications for continuation and/or duplication are available.

1. Community awareness among staff and parents of positive, meaningful and endearing parent involvement in the immediate work setting which helped equalize fund-raising and classroom activities over the remainder of the school year and which may be duplicated in successive school years.

2. A poster of community generated activities which is culturally relevant and distributed to five other Indian Head Start Programs and local participants which may contribute to more positive Indian parent involvement.

3. The comprehensive plan also allowed for duplication by other team members in the areas of health and social services. Although certain basic component requirements would necessarily be transformed, the basic format of the parent involvement improvement plan would be ideal for replication in other component areas.

4. Documentable In-Kind results and the positive Indian parent involvement poster have become a permanent part of the program's resource materials for further use. In addition, the poster may serve as possible presentation material at national conferences.

Chapter 5

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

In summarizing the practicum results, the practicum goal is of prime importance. Overall the parent involvement improvement program made strides to increase positive parent involvement in the program impacted by the practicum. Compilation of the selected documentation reveals the practicum specific objectives were not successfully met, however, the designed program orientation session proved effective in enhancing positive parent involvement particularly in terms of policy/decision making areas.

Five additional general issues are relevant as a direct result of the orientation session and the practicum solution strategies. 1. The staff gained insight and practiced empowerment strategies by developing the orientation session. 2. The parent involvement improvement program provided a team-building vehicle for the entire staff. 3. A central point for parent involvement efforts afforded focus for staff and families. 4. Program participants enjoyed themselves at an opening session setting the tone for the remainder of the school year. 5. Alternative ideas were generated from a bi-level structure of parents and staff. Specifically, a measure of the objectives is tabled below.

STATED OBJECTIVES	ACTUAL RESULTS
90% of program parents will attend program orientation	39% parents/families attended orientation
100% of program staff will attend program orientation	100% of program staff attended orientation
50% of program parents will volunteer twice monthly in the classrooms	42% volunteered once in two months for classroom activities
Positive parent involvement book will be developed and distributed	Positive parent involvement poster was developed and distributed

There are many contributing factors to the unsuccessful completion of the practicum objectives. 1. The community was impacted by a tragic auto accident at the time of the planned orientation sessions. 2. Lack of transportation to the orientation sessions. 3. Precedent of fun and enjoyable experiences in parent activities was not established. 4. 50% volunteerism in the classrooms was too high an expectation. 5. Lack of confidence among parents/families to serve in the classrooms effectively. Although immeasurable, the reasons above represent realistic and professional assumptions and observations.

Similarly, many spin-off benefits of the parent involvement improvement program can be concluded. 1. Significant proportion of program participants rallied around the parent involvement improvement focus. 2. Parent involvement perception among participants was expanded to include fun and games. 3. The policy/decision making board

will continue the practices developed during the retreat. 4. The precedent of positive parent involvement is established. 5. The positive parent involvement poster has been warmly received by other Indian pre-school programs. 6. Fund raising projects are empowering activities which can teach enterprise skills to families with little or no employment history. 7. Some participants consider fund raising activities to be positive, grass-roots economics and acts of generosity that aren't comparable to classroom volunteerism or attending parent meetings/trainings.

The unanticipated outcomes of the PPC retreat, as a rather extended orientation session, was impressive. The retreat participants have commented that they now have a much keener sense of their complex responsibilities to the program management and that effective early childhood programs practice a variety of parent involvement activities. The empowerment effects, although again immeasureable, were demonstrated by the increased attendance at policy board meetings and advocating for employment resolutions with the Tribal Council. The average of 14 PPC members attending meetings is significant growth compared to the previous average of seven members attending 1990-1991 school year meetings.

Furthermore, ten PPC members met with the Joint Tribal Business Council to address the recommended firing of two employees who were performing classroom duties unacceptably. This act is particularly noteworthy when one understands that

employment termination because of incompetence is unprecedented in the program and that the recommendation to terminate employment with the two employees had been recommended to the two previous policy boards who hadn't the determination to release the incompetent staff members. These are two specific examples which speak to the positive parent involvement in terms of policy/decision making which was not a recognized or designed objects, but nonetheless was accomplished within the practicum process.

Foerster and Little Soldier's conclusion of active play which parallels much of Native American culture can again be drawn relative to this practicum. Somewhere in the "academics" and "hard work" of early childhood education, the wonder of joy, fun and games has been displaced not only for children but parent/family members as volunteers. The Natives of this continent are seemingly and amazingly pre-disposed to enjoyment and could subsequently be identified as the richest of the rich in terms of teaching/learning that the spirit of play is a natural form of learning/living.

The idea of "play as only child's work" was challenged through the basic design of the orientation format. Structured team-building games were successful and obviously enjoyed by the participants attending the orientation sessions.

Therefore, the precept of fun and games is a prime recommendation as is capitalizing on an ecclectic approach to Indian parent involvement activities which mix play and

empowerment. Katz (1984) concretely supports fun, games and joy of play in her work NO APOLOGY FOR PLAYOLOGY by writing, "Play and laughter may be hazardous to your dis-ease" (p.1). Many of her quotes are used on the positive parent involvement poster.

The local follow-on plan includes the above basic recommendations, the positive Indian parent involvement poster which can readily be adapted from year to year by participants, and continued PPC retreats for policy making orientation. On a regional level, the positive Indian parent involvement poster and recommendations for fun and games will be shared with other northwest Indian Head Start Programs through professional coalition building and networking. Also the practicum scope will be used as resource base for national conference presentation.

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Appendix A

Parent Volunteer /Inkind Record

Center _____ MONTH _____

Name of Parent	Date Worked	Child's Name	Kind of Activity or Material	No. of Hours	Dollar Value Inkind	Parent Meeting	Volunteer in Classroom	Other

Form developed by DHHS, ACYF, HSB

I certify that the above reporting is correct. _____ Date

_____ Signature

Appendix B
Program Orientation Evaluation

_____ _____
Center Date

Please take a few minutes to comment on the orientation session. Rate the following items from 1 to 10, 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest.

The orientation session was informative. _____

The orientation session was enjoyable. _____

I learned about parent involvement. _____

I learned about the Head Start Program. _____

Please comment on the following.

I most liked the orientation session because

I think the orientation session can be improved by

I will encourage other parents to attend Head Start activities by

Other Comments:

Form developed by Karen King

Appendix C
SHOSHONE/ARAPAHOE HEAD START PROGRAM EVALUATION

Please rank the following areas of the Shoshone and Arapahoe Head Start Program. 1 AGREE STRONGLY 5 DISAGREE STRONGLY

Parent Involvement Component

1. The parent involvement component activities have helped me understand my role as a parent. 1 2 3 4 5

Comments

2. I learned about my child's development in Head Start.
1 2 3 4 5

Comments

3. My ideas were valued in the Head Start Program.
1 2 3 4 5

Comments

4. The Head Start staff encouraged our family goals.
1 2 3 4 5

Comments

5. The fund raising activities are important to Head Start
1 2 3 4 5

Comments

6. More parent trainings need to be offered to Head Start families. 1 2 3 4 5

Comments, Suggested Training Topics

Please feel free to comment on any other issue not discussed above. THANKS for your time in responding to this survey.

Form developed by Karen King

The photograph above illustrates the poster which was a direct result of the practicum work, distributed to five other Indian Head Start Programs in the northwest region, and used to elicit more positive parent involvement in the program served by the practicum. The poster was developed by the family service/parent involvement staff with quotes from NO APOLOGY FOR PLAYOLOGY by Ellie Katz, San Diego, CA. 1984.

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